



NEWS

Warm-up Makes Manure Runoff a Risk; Check Advisory Before Spreading

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MADISON – With temperatures over 40 and rain forecast in coming days, Wisconsin agriculture and water quality officials are asking farmers to check the Runoff Risk Advisory Forecast online before spreading manure.

They encourage farmers to avoid spreading manure during high-risk runoff times. If farmers must spread manure now, they should steer clear of high risk fields and have a spill response plan in place.

"The weather that is forecast could create a high risk of manure runoff to lakes, streams and groundwater if farmers spread it now," says Sara Walling, water quality section leader with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. "The online runoff risk advisory maps will give them a day-by-day forecast out 10 days, so they can avoid spreading, or if they must spread manure during that time, can take steps to minimize the risk of runoff."

The Runoff Risk Advisory Forecast is available at manureadvisorysystem.wi.gov and is part of the Wisconsin Manure Management Advisory System. The runoff forecast provides maps showing short-term runoff risk for daily application planning, taking into account factors including soil moisture, weather forecast, crop cover, snow cover, and slope. In winter, it gives a 10-day outlook day by day. It is updated three times daily by the National Weather Service.

Farmers should contact their crop consultants or county land conservation offices for help identifying alternatives to spreading, such as stacking manure away from lakes or rivers, drinking water wells, or area with sinkholes or exposed bedrock. If farmers must spread manure, crop consultants and county conservationists can help identify fields where the risk is lower. You can find contact information for county conservation offices at datcp.wi.gov, search for *conservation directory*.

"If you are unable to avoid spreading manure in the coming days, you need to use caution, and know what the conditions are on the fields where you're spreading. A winter spreading plan can help find these lower risk fields," says Amy Callis, Agricultural Nonpoint Source Implementation Coordinator with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. "You need to aim for the best outcome, but plan for the worst. You should also have a plan in place ahead of time about who to call and what steps to take if runoff or a spill occurs. How are you going to get it cleaned up and how are you going to prevent it from happening again?"

Information about preventing and planning for manure spills is available at <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/agbusiness/manurespills.html>.

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